

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

455 Golden Gate Avenue, Suite 10600, San Francisco, California 94102 tel 415 352 3600 fax 415 352 3606

July 19, 2019

Application Summary Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation Project (For Commission consideration on August 1, 2019)

Permit Application Number: 2018.007.00
Applicants: Port of San Francisco, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
Application Filed Complete: July 16, 2019
Deadline for Commission Action: October 14, 2019

Consistency Determination Number: C2017.005.01 (Material Amendment No. One)
Federal Project Sponsor: National Park Service
Request Filed Complete: July 16, 2019
Deadline for Commission Action: September 29, 2019

Staff Contact: Morgan Chow (415/352-3654; morgan.chow@bcdc.ca.gov)
Project Description: Redevelop and expand a terminal for ferry and excursion vessels.
Location: In the Bay and within the 100-foot shoreline band, at Piers 31, 31½, and 33, along The Embarcadero, in the City and County of San Francisco.

Figure 1. Photo of existing site conditions.



Figure 2. Project location.



Project Overview

Project Description

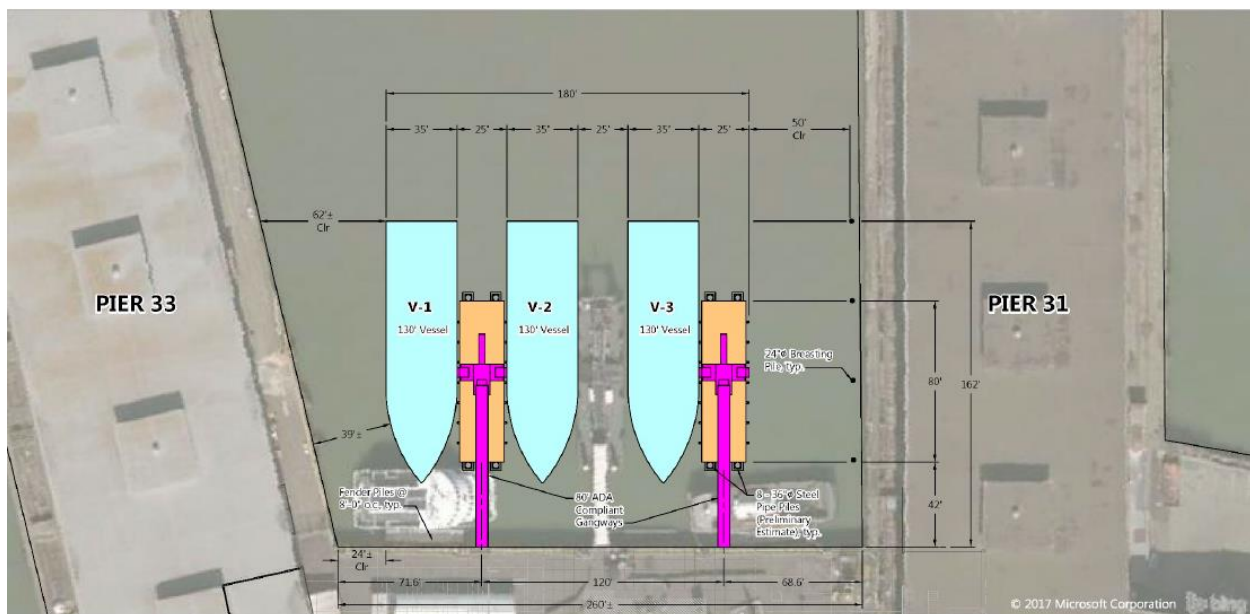
The proposed project would renovate and expand the embarkation facilities for ferry service to Alcatraz Island and for other Bay cruises, which have been located at Pier 31½ since 2006. The application states that these facilities are considered to be inadequate for the number of daily users of the site, confusing for visitors to navigate, and of a design that feels “temporary” in nature and that is inappropriate for a national park gateway. The proposed project is therefore intended to provide capacity for increased ferry service and to better orient and guide visitors through the site.

The proposed project would renovate the Pier 31½ marginal wharf, and the bulkhead and portions of the shed buildings at Piers 31 and 33. The renovations would provide a combination of indoor and outdoor space to welcome, orient, and provide improved basic amenities for the public, including ticket queuing areas, a café and retail space, interpretive displays, and a civic plaza and other public access amenities. The proposed project would also replace a dock and gangway with two parallel floating docks and gangways to support the berthing of up to three ferry boats at a time. The expanded berthing facilities would support additional interpretive Bay cruises and, in the future, could provide for limited, weekend-only service to Fort Baker in Marin County. Service to Fort Baker would require upgrades to docking and visitor facilities there, which would require consideration by the Commission at a future date.

Bay Fill

The proposed project would remove a pile-supported floating dock and gangway previously authorized under BCDC Permit No. M1985.013.03, which covers approximately 1,600 square feet of Bay surface area. The proposed project would replace these berthing facilities with two pile-supported floating docks connected to the Pier 31½ pier deck by gangways, which constitute approximately 5,029 square feet and 913 cubic yards of Bay fill. The proposed project would also install breasting piles along Pier 31, for approximately 13 square feet and 21 cubic yards of Bay fill. In total, the proposed project would result in net fill of approximately 2,469 square feet and 478 cubic yards.

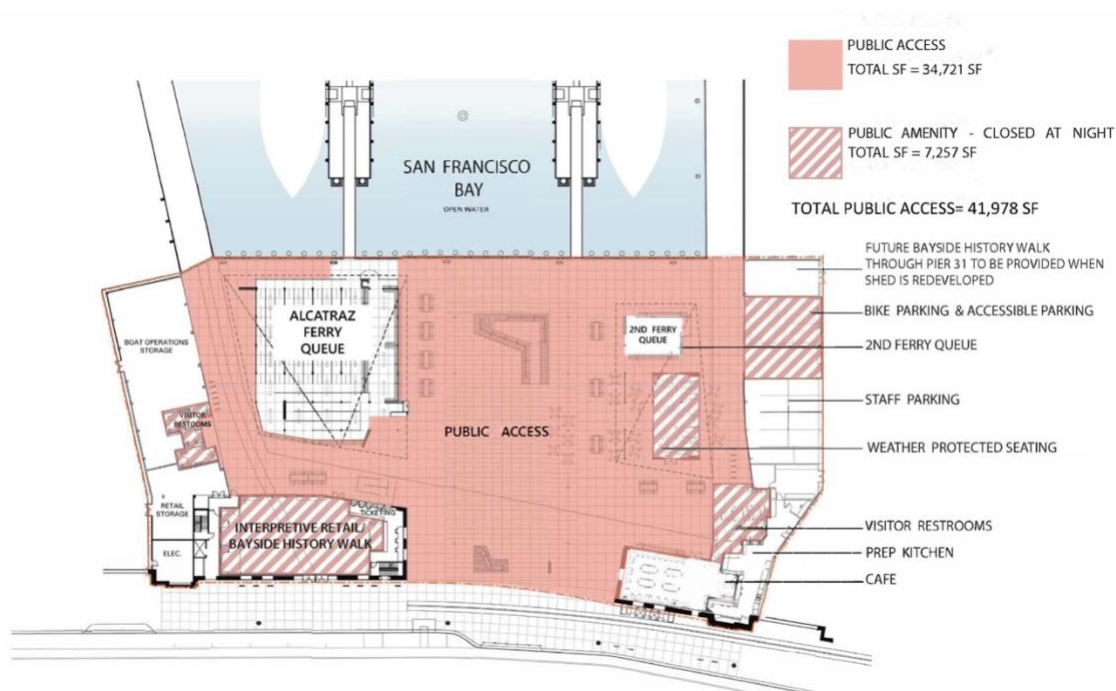
Figure 3. Proposed berthing facilities.



Public Access

The proposed project would result in the construction of approximately 34,721 square feet of new public access areas, located entirely within the Commission's permitting jurisdiction, consisting of a large civic plaza and circulation areas around the Pier 31½ marginal wharf deck, new seating, interpretive and informational displays, bike parking, and other improvements. Additional bicycle parking and a pedestrian loading area would also be provided along The Embarcadero. The proposed project would also provide public amenities that are available to the public except when closed at night, including visitor restrooms, indoor bicycle parking, an interpretive historical display within a retail shop inside the Pier 33 bulkhead building, and a weather-protected seating area. Finally, the proposed project would improve visual connections to the Bay from The Embarcadero by removing the existing canopy which partially blocks Bay views and installing new canopies that are located behind the Pier 31 and 33 bulkhead buildings, where views are already blocked.

Figure 4. Proposed public access and public amenity areas.



Flooding and Sea Level Rise

The anticipated lifetime for the project is 30 years, and the Port lease allowing for the embarkation facilities terminates in 2050. Using the methodology outlined in the 2018 California Sea Level Rise Guidance from the Ocean Protection Council and Natural Resources Agency, the project is not anticipated to experience major risk from flooding during its lifetime. Most of the project site is located on piers that are built at a sufficient elevation above water that they would not experience flooding during a 100-year storm event today, nor is it anticipated that it would be subject to flooding during a 100-year storm event at mid-century. In addition, the project would be constructed with a cast-in-place concrete curb along the guardrail at the edge of the marginal wharf that would further mitigate against flooding in the future. The in-water dock system is floating and could rise with increasing water levels.

Schedule and Cost

The applicants state that construction would begin in 2019 and end in 2023. Construction of upgraded berthing infrastructure is expected to occur in 2020, with pile driving occurring from barges and lasting approximately three days. Interior building and exterior plaza renovations are expected to occur in phases between 2019 and 2023. The total project cost is projected at \$7,367,000.

Staff Notes

The staff notes the following considerations for the Commission:

Issues Raised

The staff believes the central issues raised by the proposed project is whether it is consistent with the Commission's law and policies related to (1) allowable Bay fill, (2) maximum feasible public access, and (3) flooding and sea level rise. A list of applicable McAteer-Petris Act, San Francisco Bay Plan, and San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan policies is attached as Exhibit A.

Special Events

The applicants propose to hold special events that would require limited closures to the project's public access areas (see Exhibit C). The application states that such events could include "concerts, musical and theatrical performances, and other forms of live entertainment, public ceremonies, art or historical exhibitions, or other public or private exhibitions and activities related thereto." The applicants request ongoing authorization to conduct the special events as follows:

- Twelve events each year that would be limited to the south side of the marginal wharf, generally below the canopy, and only after normal business hours.
- Two events each year that would require full closure of the public access areas for up to 24 hours each event.

The staff notes that the Commission has not in the past typically approved an ongoing authorization to allow *full* closure of a project's public access areas for special events. There are other locations in San Francisco, notably at East Wharf Park between Piers 35 and 39 and at the forthcoming Crane Cove Park and "Mission Rock" mixed-use development, where the Commission has authorized ongoing special events to occur within a portion of the required public access areas. Events at these locations are limited to pre-determined zones to ensure that some portion of the public access area remains open at all time. However, these are also much larger sites than the Alcatraz Embarkation site, where the total public access area is approximately 0.78 acres.

The staff also notes that Commission permits have not in the past necessarily precluded special events that would result in full closure of a public access area. Special events of this nature generally could be approved at the discretion of the Executive Director upon a finding that an event has taken appropriate measures to limit disruption to shoreline public access in the area and that the event would overall bring people to the waterfront. The applicants' proposal for the Alcatraz Embarkation site is unique in that it proposes that any event, public or private, be authorized by right and in advance without the need for such a finding, albeit for a very limited period totaling no more than 48 hours in a calendar year.

Required Commission Action

In order for the proposed project to proceed, the Commission must take two related actions:

- *First*, the Commission would approve BCDC Major Permit Application No. 2018.007.00, to the Port of San Francisco and Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, co-applicants for the development and operation of the facilities discussed in this Application Summary.
- *Second*, the Commission would issue Material Amendment No. One to BCDC Consistency Determination No. C2017.005.00, by which it would concur with National Park Service's determination that the proposed project is consistent with the Commission's Amended Management Program for San Francisco Bay under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA).

The Commission's concurrence with National Park Service's federal consistency determination is necessary for procedural purposes related to the required review under the CZMA. National Park Service first requested Commission concurrence with the project in 2017, at which time only a conceptual level of detail was available for the project. The Executive Director, acting on the Commission's behalf, issued a letter of agreement finding the project to be conceptually consistent with the Commission's Amended Management Program for the San Francisco Bay. Given the lack of sufficient detail in the project presented to BCDC at that time, the approval was conditioned to require National Park Service to submit additional information to allow the Commission to evaluate and concur with the project's consistency as detailed information became available with regard to each phase of the project. The project at issue in this Application Summary is the first detailed phase of the project to be considered as part of this "phased" consistency determination request.

Board Review

The Design Review Board (DRB) reviewed the project in coordination with the Port's Waterfront Design Advisory Committee (WDAC) at its meetings on August 2, 2017 and January 22, 2018.

- At the August 7, 2017 meeting, the Board favorably reviewed the project and suggested the project proponents refine elements of the design related to the canopies, lighting, bollards, signage, open space usability and circulation, interpretive amenities (particularly for children), plantings, plaza orientation, sense of arrival, and connection to the surrounding areas. In response, prior to the second review, the permittees made several changes to the proposed design including: details to the canopy, revisions to seating and bicycle parking, additional planting, plaza material changes, a lighting plan, revisions to the railings, a new signage and wayfinding strategy, and additional interpretation opportunities.
- At the second meeting on January 22, 2018, the Board expressed its approval of the changes to the design; in particular, how it provided for views, the design of the canopy and plaza, and the transparency, lightness, and elegance of the buildings that tie well to the surrounding landscape.

Exhibits

- A. Applicable Commission Law and Policies
- B. Proposed Site Plan
- C. Proposed Special Events